

14. Appendix to Subpart 1253.3 is amended by deleting Form DOT F 4220.44.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

50 CFR Parts 600 and 648

[I.D. 092398A]

Magnuson-Stevens Act Provisions; General Provisions for Domestic Fisheries; Application for Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) to Conduct Experimental Fishing

AGENCY: National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Commerce.

ACTION: Notification of experimental fishery proposal; request for comments.

SUMMARY: NMFS announces that the Regional Administrator, Northeast Region, NMFS, is considering approval of an experimental fishing proposal that would allow vessels to conduct operations otherwise restricted by regulations governing the Fisheries of the Northeastern United States. The experimental fishery would involve fishing for, retention, and limited landing of *Loligo* squid, scup, and various bycatch species including, but

not limited to, black sea bass, summer flounder, sea trout, and butterfish. Regulations under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act provisions require publication of this notification to provide interested parties the opportunity to comment on the proposed experimental fishery.

DATES: Comments must be received by October 16, 1998.

ADDRESSES: Comments should be sent to Jon Rittgers, Acting Regional Administrator, Northeast Regional Office, NMFS, 1 Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930. Mark the outside of the envelope "Comments on Proposed Experimental Fishery."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Tom Warren, Fishery Management Specialist, 978-281-9347.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Haskin Shellfish Research Laboratory of Rutgers University, New Jersey, submitted an application for an exempted fishery permit (EFP) on May 5, 1998, to investigate the species and size selectivity of various codend mesh sizes. A 5-day cruise targeting scup and a 5-day cruise targeting *Loligo* squid will occur during the period January 1 to April 30, 1999. Two vessels with Federal permits will tow otter trawls with experimental cod-end mesh sizes of 1-7/8, 2.0, 2-1/8, and 2.5 inches (47, 50, 53, and 63 mm) and a cod-end cover with 1.0-inch (25-mm) mesh to compare the size frequency of *Loligo* squid and the size frequencies and

relative abundances of species caught as bycatch. The same two vessels will use cod-end mesh sizes of 3.75, 4.0, 4.5, and 5.0 inches (94, 100, 113, and 125 millimeters) and a cod-end cover with 2.0-inch (50-mm) mesh to compare the size frequency of scup and the size frequencies and relative abundances of species caught as bycatch. At least 30 tows of approximately 1 hour duration will be conducted during each 5-day cruise. The commercial species caught will be marketed, and proceeds will be used to partially fund the scientific research. Landings for a particular species will be limited by all applicable fishery regulations, including applicable state or Federal limits in effect at the time of the research. Tows will occur in Mid-Atlantic waters southeast of New Jersey and the Delmarva peninsula in statistical areas 616, 622, 623, and 626. EFPs are required to exempt vessels from gear restrictions of the Fishery Management Plans for the Atlantic Mackerel, Squid, and Butterfish Fisheries and for the Summer Flounder, Scup, and Black Sea Bass Fisheries and to allow possession of undersized fish while data are being collected.

Authority: 16 U.S.C. 1801 *et seq.*

Dated: September 25, 1998.

Bruce C. Morehead,

Acting Director, Office of Sustainable Fisheries, National Marine Fisheries Service.

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